Valdosta State University

Master of Public Administration Program

Department of Political Science

A Handbook for Students

Sixth Edition
2014

VALDOSTA
S T A T E
UNIVERSITY

NASPAA
ACCREDITED
The Commission on Peer
Review & Accreditation

A NASPAA Accredited Program in Public Management

Offered Online, and at

Moody Air Force Base, Valdosta, Georgia

West Hall – Home of the MPA Program

       This handbook sets forth the specific requirements and procedures established by the Department of Political Science for the Master of Public Administration program. It supplements but does not replace the general policies, requirements, and procedures provided in the Valdosta State University Graduate Bulletin. Students are responsible for becoming familiar with both documents.

       It is the student's responsibility to keep apprised of current graduation requirements for his or her degree program. While the provisions of this handbook will ordinarily be applied as stated, the Department of Political Science reserves the right to modify any provisions listed in this handbook, including but not limited to academic requirements for graduation, without actual notice to individual students. Reasonable efforts will be made, however, to keep students advised of any such changes. Information regarding such modifications will be available in the office of the Department of Political Science.

I. Foreword

The Department of Political Science offers graduate instruction leading to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree. The program of study is offered in an executive format for the convenience of military personnel and civilians at the Moody AFB (Valdosta), as well as online.

The program consists of 36 semester-hours of coursework, divided into core/required courses, guided electives, and a concentration area. A concentration in Human Resource Management is offered at Moody AFB as an evening program, with classes meeting two nights a week for five weeks. The concentrations of Public Policy and Public Sector Management are offered exclusively via the Internet, and are designed for in-service professionals.

The MPA degree is designed to provide students with basic administrative skills that may be used in a variety of administrative careers. While the public and the not-for-profit sectors have traditionally offered the greatest employment opportunities for MPA graduates, the degree is becoming increasingly accepted as an entry degree into administration in the private sector.

The program of study leading to the MPA degree is designed to involve graduate students in academic work that differs from undergraduate work in both quantity and quality. Graduate students must expect the Department to be more discriminating in its judgment of advanced students than of undergraduate students. Every course will involve a variety of assignments that will sharpen skills in research and writing as well as increasing the substantive knowledge of the student. The success or failure of a student in the program will be determined by the initiative, intelligence, and persistence of the individual student. Faculty and staff will be eager to render any assistance needed, but graduate students are expected to assume responsibility for their own success.

II. Program History

Valdosta State University is one of two Regional Universities in the University System of Georgia. The University System of Georgia includes all state-operated institutions of higher education in Georgia: four research universities, two regional universities, 13 senior colleges, and 15 junior colleges. These 34 public institutions are located throughout the state.

The institution that is now Valdosta State University was authorized by a special act of the Georgia Legislature in 1906. The school opened its doors to "young ladies" on January 2, 1913, offering two years of college work. In 1922 the school began its first four-year bachelor's degree programs. In 1950 the school became coeducational and changed its name to Valdosta State College. On July 1, 1993, Valdosta State became a Regional University within the University System of Georgia. As one of two regional universities in the system, Valdosta State University is charged with meeting the needs of a forty-one county region encompassing approximately one-third of the total land area of Georgia.

The Master of Public Administration program has been in operation at Valdosta State University since 1981. The program was initially located within the School of Business, but was transferred to the Department of Political Science in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1983. The Head of the Department of Political Science served as the administrative head of the program until 1989, when Valdosta State University authorized the position of Coordinator of the Master of Public Administration Program. From 1989 to the present, the MPA Coordinator has served as the administrative head of the program, under the direction of the Head of the Department of Political Science.

The first students were admitted to the program in 1981, with the first degrees being awarded in 1983.

The MPA program received initial accreditation from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) in 1997 and was reaccredited in 2005 and 2012.

III. Mission

The Master of Public Administration degree Is offered within the context of a regional university as defined by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Department serves graduate students within the Valdosta State University 41county service area, nationwide, and indeed throughout the world.

The MPA program seeks to promote and to maintain a research and service program consistent

with the role of a regional university within the University System of Georgia. As stated by the Board of Regents, this says, in part:

> *The mission will differ from that of comprehensive universities in the following areas: (1) the focus of all activities–instruction, research and service–at the regional university will be sectional in nature, not statewide; (2) academic programming at the graduate level will be generally limited to professional areas of high demand; (3) organized research will focus on needs indigenous to the section of the state served and will be practical in nature.*

The complete mission statement is available at the MPA website: www.valdosta.edu/pa. This document states the educational philosophy and mission of the Master of Public Administration program and provides guidelines for periodic assessment to guide performance.

IV. Admission To Graduate Study

A. Students may enter a program of study leading to the MPA degree from the Department of Political Science only after they have been admitted by the Graduate School. Students applying for regular status as graduate students in the Department of Political Science must provide the following:

> 1. official transcript(s) verifying an undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university,
> 2. acceptable scores on either the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). The verbal and the higher score on the quantitative ability or analytic ability sections of the GRE will be used to determine candidacy status.
> 3. three letters of reference from individuals qualified to comment on the candidate's potential for success in the program, and
> 4. a resume and statement of career goals.

Candidates may be admitted in either regular or probationary status, depending upon an evaluation of their credentials. Students admitted on a probationary basis must have a graduate grade point average (GGPA) of 3.0 or better upon completing their first nine semester hours of MPA course work.

Candidates for the online concentrations of Public Policy and Public Sector Management must be working in an appropriate setting, or have prior work experience in an approp0riate setting.

Exceptionally motivated students who fail to qualify for regular or probationary admittance may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for admission by exception to the MPA program. Students admitted in this category will not be allowed to change their course schedule, including withdrawing from a course, without the permission of the PA Coordinator.

V. Academic Requirements

Students must maintain a minimum of a 2.5 grade point average . Students must have a Graduate Grade Point Average (GGPA) of 3.0 or higher to graduate from the program. A grade of less than B received at Valdosta State University cannot be balanced by work transferred from another school.

A student whose grade point average drops below a 3.0 will be placed upon academic probation, and must return his or her grade point average to a 3.0 within the next nine semester hours of course work. A student failing to return his or her grade point average to a 3.0 during this period may continue to pursue the MPA degree only upon the recommendation of the MPA Coordinator with the concurrence of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Students will be dismissed from the MPA program if they accumulate three or more academic deficiency points. A grade of "C" (while it will be credited toward the MPA degree) equals one deficiency point. A grade of "D," "WF," "U," or "F" (none of which will be credited toward the MPA degree) equals two deficiency points.

A maximum of six semester hours of graduate work earned at another institution may be transferred into the MPA degree program. The PA Coordinator and the Dean of the Graduate School must approve all transfer credit.

A grade of "I" in a course to be counted toward the MPA degree should be removed the following semester. Any student carrying an incomplete grade ("I") over two semesters may continue to pursue the MPA degree only with the approval of the PA Coordinator.

Each student must submit an Application for Graduate Degree form **no later than** the semester before expected graduation. The student should complete only the **top portion** of the form, **sign** the form in the appropriate place, and then submit the form, along with a receipt for the graduation fee, to the PA Coordinator.

Courses taken more than seven years prior to the semester of degree completion may not be used to meet graduate degree requirements. Under extenuating circumstances a student with the approval of the PA Coordinator may appeal in writing for a one-time extension of this limitation. A committee, approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, will consider the appeal and may recommend to the Dean of the Graduate School that the student be granted an extension of the seven-year limitation. The maximum extension for completion of the program may not exceed one additional calendar year.

VI. Internship Requirements

Students pursuing the MPA are expected to complete an internship (PADM 7210) with an administrative agency approved by the MPA Coordinator. There is a minimum requirement of 300 hours to be completed evenly throughout the semester in order to obtain one semester-hour credit. Students taking an internship are expected to maintain a weekly log of activities, and to submit that log to the MPA Coordinator upon completion of the internship.

PADM 7210: Internship in PA is a co-requisite of PADM 7900: Capstone Seminar in PA Both courses are to be taken in the student's final semester of coursework.

Students whose background and work experience make a normal internship inappropriate may request that they be allowed to meet the internship requirement through their present position. All students must complete a portfolio relating their background and work experience to the goals of the MPA program. The request should be made at least one semester before a student expects to graduate.

D. More specific information concerning the internship requirements is contained in the *Internship Handbook*, available from the PA Coordinator or from the Internship Coordinator.

VII. Student Responsibilities

By awarding an MPA degree to a student, Valdosta State University is indicating to prospective employers that the student is a person whom an organization would deem a valuable contributor in a professional, possibly managerial capacity. Thus a student must demonstrate high professional standards while in the program.

Each student taking classes in a regular classroom setting is expected to attend all classes, arriving on time and not leaving until the class is completed. Students who have valid reasons for missing a given class should make arrangements with the instructor in advance. In case of emergency, a student is expected to inform the instructor and arrange for make-up work for missed classes as soon as is feasible. Students who wish to take a course in a semester in which they know they will miss some of the class periods must make acceptable arrangements with and gain the permission of the course instructor before registering for the course.

Each student in an online course is expected to participate in each assignment, including chat room and threaded discussion assignments. Students who have valid reasons for missing a given assignment should make arrangements with the instructor in advance. In case of emergency, a student is expected to inform the instructor and arrange for make-up work for missed sessions as soon as is feasible. Students who wish to take a course in a semester in which they know they will miss some of the class periods must make acceptable arrangements with and gain the permission of the course instructor before registering for the course.

Research papers are to follow APSA style. All material taken from any source–books, articles, newspapers, other student papers, class lectures, etc.– must be properly cited, and all sources identified. **Plagiarism is prohibited**, and may result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course, and in extreme cases suspension or dismissal from the program.

Each student is required to read and be familiar with the section on plagiarism in the VSU *Thesis and Dissertation Guide* (pp. 25-28). (The plagiarism section of the *Guide* is taken from Virginia Tech, with permission.) Each student must sign the student statement, and return that statement to the PA Coordinator.

Because of the accelerated nature of the course work in the courses offered at Moody AFB an instructor may require that assignments be prepared in advance of the first class. Therefore, students **must** review syllabi well in advance of the first class and prepare any such assignments.

IX. Additional Information

Questions concerning the program should be addressed to the Coordinator. However, personnel at Valdosta State University's off-campus centers may be able to answer questions a student may have.

Telephone numbers are:

PA Coordinator:	229.293.6058
Graduate School:	229.333.5694
VSU Center, Moody AFB:	229.257.4163

Each student is to prepare a program of study and have that program approved by the MPA Coordinator. Students should consult the *Graduate Catalog* in effect at the time they enter the program to determine the requirements for their program of study. Any changes made in program requirements after the student has entered the program become optional for her/him; that is, a student may remain under the requirements effective when he/she entered the program or may opt to finish the program under the new requirements.

Any student who is inactive in the program for one calendar year or longer will be required to submit a request for readmission, and, if readmitted, must follow the program requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Appendix I

Student Statement:

I have read and I understand the section on plagiarism from the VSU *Thesis and Dissertation Guide*. I understand that any work submitted by me in the MPA program may be submitted to an electronic data base to check for plagiarism, and that any work so submitted will be added to that data base. I understand that the minimum penalty for plagiarism is a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment. I further understand that plagiarism may result in me receiving a failing grade for the course involved or in termination from the program. I affirm that all work submitted by me to be original work, except where clearly documented.

_____ Name (printed)

_____
          Signature

_____
          Date